



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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January 26, 1972

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

Mrs. Eunice K. Shriver
The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
719 Thirteenth Street, N.W. Suite 510
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mrs. Shriver,

We have been in touch with the foundation office concerning the meeting of the Kennedy Foundation Board in Boston that we had discussed over the telephone. I am sorry that my teaching schedule and other firm commitments have prevented me from participating in this meeting, but as Dr. Eric Shooter has agreed to represent us, I feel that you will have lost nothing. Dr. Shooter is a most accomplished neurochemist who has taken a leading role in the development of neurobiological sciences at Stanford, having been appointed as a direct fulfillment of the opportunities given us by the original award from the foundation.

I have also been pondering some earlier correspondence with Dr. Kretchmer, that he has referred to me, concerning a brochure describing the activities of our laboratories. As you know, we do not have a specific operating organization -- for example, we have no operating budget whatsoever for the activities furthered in the facilities of the Kennedy Laboratories here. The departments of genetics and of pediatrics, and a number of other programs in the departments of neurology, GYN, and others are the principal means by which we believe we are making significant contributions to research in the fundamental causes as well as in coping more immediately with problems of mental retardation. These research activities are described in the departmental announcements of which copies are enclosed. In addition, I am sending a few representative publications of the work of different professors in the laboratories, although I believe you or the foundation may already have received some of them.

I do not wish to appear complacent about the style that characterizes our present efforts although we can, I think, be quite proud of the specific research activities of the different groups. Obviously, there is room for more effective coordination between the basic sciences and clinically oriented work in genetics, molecular biology, pediatrics, and neurology. Unfortunately, we did not have the resources to be able to keep Dr. Guy McKhann at Stanford which I particularly regret since he was undoubtedly the keystone of our integrated effort. We have been painfully rebuilding a department of neurology and a program in neurobiology since Dr. McKhann's leaving, and this is just beginning to bear fruit under the leadership of Professor David Prince as the chairman of that department. Under Dr. Shooter's leadership as chairman of the basic neurosciences group, we have also been making strong efforts to fund an enlargement of our capability in neurobiology, but have so far been

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LT. J. P. KENNEDY, JR. LABORATORIES FOR MOLECULAR MEDICINE, DEDICATED TO RESEARCH IN MENTAL RETARDATION

MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

HEREDITY

NEUROBIOLOGY

DEVELOPMENTAL MEDICINE

quite discouraged in the responses of federal and of philanthropic agencies to which applications have been made during an era of cut-backs for health research. Dr. Shooter will be well able to enlarge upon these aspirations and our frustration about them at the meeting.

In another related direction I would also have hoped that we might be able to strengthen our position in clinical genetics and in genetic counseling, including such fields as prenatal diagnosis of biochemical defect, and the use of very recent developments in molecular biology for the diagnosis of genetic disease. The genetics research initiative funding for which I testified before the House Appropriations Committee provided budgetary support for a considerable increase in genetic research and for the establishment of clinical genetics centers at various institutions throughout the country. I am glad to note that this new program of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences has been getting under way in a vigorous fashion, but I am deeply chagrined that local developments here have made it difficult for us to participate at the very inception of these new efforts. The basic problem here is the lapse in the leadership of the department of pediatrics, subsequent to Dr. Kretchmer's resignation three years ago, and again Dr. Herbert Schwartz' resignation more recently, this has left the chairmanship of that department vacant at the most critical time and it would be futile to attempt to make firm plans for new cooperative efforts in the absence of a new permanent head. These convulsions are not unrelated to the general financial crisis of the medical schools with which you are already very familiar. I am most optimistic, however, that under the leadership that our new dean, Dr. Clayton Rich, is clearly demonstrating, that we will be picking up the pieces and making a fresh start at Stanford. I should tell you that I am the chairman of the search committee that is now seeking the replacement for Dr. Schwartz and the issues mentioned in this letter will, of course, not be neglected in our considerations.

Meanwhile, our laboratories are continuing to operate -- if with less integrated purpose than might be desirable -- nevertheless, with a high level of research efficacy and I am sure that, again, Dr. Shooter will be delighted to report more informally about the various scientific activities going on here.

I may also say that I have been pursuing a number of inquiries about ways of strengthening the investigation and teaching of ethical problems related to medicine. While I am perhaps more cautious than most about bringing federal support, and perhaps control, into this arena, I have a deep conviction that this is a task we do not do very well now and for which we must obtain the funds to proceed from whatever sources can be tapped for it. The department of philosophy, headed by Professor David Nivison, has expressed (informally to me) a definite interest in focussing on these issues but we do not yet have a concrete proposal that would bear critical scrutiny by a granting body. We face here a problem typical of many other areas, namely that apart from the central proponents, like Dr. Nivison and myself, many of our colleagues

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are reluctant to drop other lines of work to participate in careful planning for new activities, unless they can have some confidence that there are places where our proposals might be sympathetically and efficaciously received.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr
c.c. Dr. Eric Shooter
Dean Rich

Enclosures